

E. Estyn Evans and His Lasting Importance to the Study of Folklore

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Today in 1996, material culture and folklife are familiar terms to folklorists. In addition to folktales and ballads, folklorists study houses, tools, and plastic arts to gain insight into the worldview and culture of small and large groups. As folklorists, we owe many thanks to E. Estyn Evans, the late Belfast-based scholar of geography and Irish studies, for helping expand the definition of a folklore “text” by championing the folklife movement in Europe and America.¹

Also today, terms such as “evolution” and “survivals” throw up red flags for folklorists, sparking off associations in our minds with outdated theories that can be used to legitimate imperialism and racism. Yet folklorists also owe Evans a closer examination of his use and reinterpretation of these terms. His views on geography, history, and folklore may surprise us and prevent us, in many cases, from throwing the proverbial baby out with the bath water if our immediate reaction to words like “survivals” is one of dismissal.

Through his commitment to contextualization, Evans bridged the disciplines of folklore, anthropology, history, archaeology, and geography. Above all, he had a highly integrative mind that was not confined by disciplinary boundaries which are often no more than claims of intellectual property that impede comprehensive understanding. As a growing number of scholars wisely call for more interdisciplinary research and dialogue,² Evans’s work serves as an excellent model.

I hope to recommend Evans to folklorists by offering his perspectives on issues raised by early framers of the study of folklore, such as Edward Burnett Tylor, Lewis Henry Morgan, and especially the early advocate of folklore studies in America, Franz Boas.³

Boas is worthy of special attention in this exploration of Evans’s scholarship for a number of reasons. Both Evans and Boas had great influence

in the development of folklore studies in their respective countries while identifying primarily with disciplines other than folklore—Evans with cultural geography and Boas with anthropology. Both were often concerned with identical questions such as the extent to which geography influences culture. Where their conclusions diverge, the contrast sets Evans's views in greater relief and allows us clearer insight into his scholarship.

As insightful as their divergences can be, what I find most important and most inspirational is one point of convergence between Evans and Boas. While Evans's conception of folklife studies may be more inclusive than Boas's idea of what folklorists should study (i.e., oral literature), Evans's expansion of what constitutes useful material for folklorists emanates from what amounts to a very Boasian notion: studying the creations of a group of people "has the merit of bringing out those points which are of interest to the people themselves" and which, therefore, are most eloquent of culture (Boas 1970:393). At the bottom of both Evans's and Boas's scholarship lies the conviction that many folklorists embrace: paying attention to what people hold most dear, to their own articulations of mind, affords more ethnographic insight than the preconceived theoretical abstractions that ethnographers take with them to the field. Having started in different disciplinary domains, both Evans and Boas converged on this idea, one which I believe to be essential to answering the questions, "What is folklore?" and "Why study folklore?"

Not only does Evans offer folklorists a broad definition of folklore that includes thicker description and contextualization of the material dimensions of life, he also offers us insight into why the study of human culture, anthropology writ large, benefits from the study of folklore and folklife. To illustrate this, I will sketch Evans's life and work; follow with discussions of his perspectives on geography, culture, and history; and conclude with some thoughts on Evans's lasting importance to the study of folklore.

The Life and Work of E. Estyn Evans

Born in 1905 to Welsh-speaking parents living in England, E. Estyn Evans spent much of his youth in Wales where he grew to love the countryside and rural life. He earned his undergraduate degree at University College Aberystwyth (Wales) in Anthropology and Geography and studied with H. J. Fleure, the leading cultural and historical geographer of his generation.

In 1928, at the age of 23, Evans took his first academic post in the Geography Department of Queen's University of Belfast, Northern Ireland. At the time, he was one of only two geography professors. Evans spent fifty years at Queen's, for forty of which he headed the Geography Department. Under his guidance, the department grew to thirty-five professors and became one of the most respected geography departments

in the world. Evans's student Ronald Buchanan characterizes Evans's teaching and interdisciplinary vision:

His holistic view, which stressed the continuing interaction between culture and environment, formed the core of Estyn's teaching. . . . For students his breadth of vision, world-wide and timeless, was a constant stimulus, not least because it refused to recognize the narrow subject boundaries of conventional academic disciplines. (Buchanan 1990:1-2)

Early in his career, Evans conducted numerous archaeological excavations and surveys and founded the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*. As many friends and followers of Evans maintain, he would be a celebrated scholar today even if he had concentrated exclusively on his archaeological work. Buchanan recalls that, "His work on folklife was initially the by-product of his fieldwork in archaeology, through the people he met, the houses he visited and the implements he saw in use in field and farmyard" (1990:2).

Evans's growing interest in folklife studies,⁴ which for him was essentially an archaeologically and geographically inflected anthropology, culminated in his book *Irish Heritage: the Landscape, the People and their Work* (1942). Due to its popularity with both academic and public audiences, Evans reworked and expanded *Irish Heritage* to produce *Irish Folk Ways* (1957), widely considered a classic in material culture studies.⁵

In 1958, Evans organized an improbable and often contentious group of civil servants, politicians, and academics who successfully campaigned for an Act of Parliament to establish the Ulster Folk Museum. Evans then became the Director and Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the museum. The UFM was built on the Scandinavian model of outdoor folklife museums. Included on its sixty-three acres are buildings from every region of Ireland, working farms, and an extensive archive and research center that publishes a well-known journal, *Ulster Folklife*.

One of the museum's objectives, familiar to folklorists, is to celebrate the dignity, traditions, and creative achievements of ordinary people. Built with the cooperation of the British government and the Catholic Nationalist and Protestant Unionist communities, the museum is equally remarkable as a political, or rather anti-political,⁶ statement. After Ireland's partition in 1922, the British government was more concerned with building police stations and military barracks in Northern Ireland than with building cultural and academic centers.⁷ Using his Welsh heritage as a claim to neutrality in the politics of Northern Ireland, Evans argued that his museum was an investment as good as, if not better than, any security installation. "Here, at least, in the effort to record, preserve, and study traditional Ulster ways and values, a divided community appears to find common ground" (Evans 1965:355). The underlying

rhetoric of the museum, and of much of Evans's writing, is that people who share a common landscape and way of life have more in common than they have differences despite prescriptive categorizations of people by religion, language, place of origin, or politics.

Near his retirement, Evans founded and directed the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's. With a special emphasis on material culture, the Institute funded folklore fieldwork and archiving in Northern Ireland, complementing the Irish Folklore Commission in the southern Republic which focused primarily on oral traditions. Scholarly relations between north and south have remained warm due in good part to Evans, who was as concerned with importing southern folklore scholarship as he was with exporting northern folklife scholarship.

Throughout his career, Evans was a well-known public lecturer and broadcaster for BBC (British Broadcasting Company) and RTE (Radio Telefís Éireann).⁸ With almost half of his prolific body of written work directed toward a popular audience, Evans was perhaps the best in his field for reaching the public and for demonstrating that using an exclusive academic dialect is not always necessary for conveying a clear, incisive message.

Widely respected on both sides of the Atlantic, Evans died in 1989.

Geography and Culture

Evans's investment in geography can be summed up in one of his opening remarks in *Irish Heritage*: "[T]he whole of human culture is indissolubly bound up with the landscape which it has both influenced and been influenced by" (1942:13).

The idea of anthropo-geography, the study of the relationship between human culture and the physical environment, developed in Germany in the nineteenth century, near the end of the Age of Discovery.⁹ One school of thought originating with Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904), who coined the term "anthropo-geography," maintained that a physical environment—climate, topography, geology, and other features of geography—shapes and determines the culture of its human inhabitants. Critical of the one-way street implied by this environmental determinism, another school of thought exemplified by Paul Vidal de la Blache (1845-1918), Jean Brunhes (1869-1930), and H. J. Fleure (1877-1969) emerged in France. Building upon the work of Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859) and Carl Ritter (1779-1859) in Germany, this French school proposed a more dialectical model of the relationship between geography and culture. It was in this latter school that Evans and his American colleagues Carl Sauer (1889-1975) and Robert Platt (1880-1950) were trained.

As a devotee of H. J. Fleure, Evans conceived of the relationship between geography and culture as decidedly dialectical—one could not be studied without the other.

For the human or cultural geographer, environment without man is not environment: both are abstractions unless they are taken together. This is the core of traditional human geography exposed and expounded by the founder-fathers, Alexander von Humboldt and Karl Ritter [*sic*], and later clarified by the findings of Charles Darwin. (1992 [1973]:8)¹⁰

The significance of Evans's reference to Darwin will be more apparent in the coming discussion of history, survivals, and evolution. Evans summarizes his stand against a simplistic environmental determinism thus:

While it will be admitted that the environment must have some bearing on human cultures, its physical nature and the resources it provides cannot by themselves explain anything. . . . Societies are constantly altering their environments. (1992 [1973]:9)

In contrast, Boas discarded his early interest in the relationship between geography and culture. Having lived with the Inuit of Cumberland Sound and Davis Strait in Canada, Boas wrote *The Central Eskimo* (1888) as an early ethnographic experiment in anthropo-geography. However, he felt his work was impaired by "an exaggerated belief in the importance of geographical determinants" which resulted in his "thorough disillusionment in regard to their significance as creative elements in cultural life" (1982 [1940]:306). In 1888, Boas concluded that:

A relation between soil and history cannot be denied, but we are not in a position to explain social and mental behavior on this basis and anthropo-geographical "laws" are valid only as vague, empty generalities. Climate and soil exert an influence upon the body and its functions, but it is not possible to prove that the character of the country finds immediate expression in that of its inhabitants. (1982 [1940]:637)

While Boas conceded that the physical environment has some indirect influence on culture, that influence is not "creative"; it merely conditions culture, which has an autonomy greater than and antecedent to geographical influence. Because he failed to consider the relationship between geography and culture as dialectical, Boas was perhaps premature in his conclusion. His characterization and criticism of geographers indicates that he was mired in an equation of the study of geography with environmental determinism—"Geographers try to derive all forms of human culture from the geographical

environment in which man lives" (1982 [1940]:255). Evans would have actually agreed with Boas that a strict environmental determinism is narrow-minded and one-sided, but as we shall see, he would have strongly disagreed with Boas's contention that geography played no significantly creative role in culture.

It is an odd coincidence that both European folklife studies as expounded by Evans and American folklore studies as expounded by Boas began with the investigation of geography. Further, it is interesting to speculate about how Boas's abandoning of geography affected the course of American anthropology for several decades. Leaving behind the task of situating people in their environments and in the material dimensions of their lives, American anthropology gradually took up a fascination with theory and abstraction—e.g., personality and culture, functionalism, and structuralism—that was not in itself artificial or false but that quite often neglected much needed contextualization. Both folklore and geography diverged from anthropology to attend to aspects of culture, such as artistic expression and human interaction with the landscape, that anthropology mostly ignored.¹¹

Having articulated his position on the fallacy of environmental determinism, Evans was free to demonstrate how the physical environment can be a creative force in culture. For example, in conjunction with non-environmental matters (such as the land tenure system and religious belief), the rocky terrain, heavy yearly rainfall, and acidic soils of much of Northern Ireland insured that the Irish peasantry (Catholic and Protestant) depended on a form of subsistence farming and pastoralism that required cooperation between neighbors. Because of the ethic of reciprocity that is partially an adaptation to the physical environment, members of rural Irish cultures tend to value community and the collective good and to be openly suspicious of individual wealth and success.

Although the environment's influence on cultural values may at times be indirect, Evans's thorough investigations of the correlations of Irish agricultural, settlement, and kinship patterns demonstrate the "clear relationship between the ways in which men's basic needs are satisfied and their social organization" (1942:xiv). Further, and perhaps most important, Evans's work illustrates that those with a special interest in material culture cannot ignore geography.

The tools and traits we are describing in this book [*Irish Folk Ways*] have persisted through the centuries because of their close adaptation to the Irish environment, physical and social. They have gathered around them, in that environment, associations of usage and ritual without which they are meaningless, so that transplanted into another

land they would be museum-pieces. . . . To understand them, therefore, we should consider them not in isolation but as part and parcel of a particular environment. To a large extent a culture owes its specific peculiarities to its geographical setting. (1957:13, my emphasis)

As the previous discussion of the Ulster Folk Museum indicated, seeing geographical units rather than political units as the baseline of cultural variation has important anti-political implications. Evans seems to have agreed completely with Fleure's assertion that the discovery of interrelationships between humans and landscape is an important intellectual step toward de-emphasizing superficial but often blinding ideological differences (Fleure 1949:7-8). Especially in places like Northern Ireland where political boundaries are not coterminous with conventionally defined cultural groups, cultural geography and folklife studies are avenues through which one can view the world as ordered not from above by politicians but literally from below. As folklorist Henry Glassie, a friend and follower of Evans, maintains:

All the people who began the folklife movement, wherever in the world, were very interested in geographic patterning. And geographic patterning is always an interest of people who, like Evans, . . . place a low value upon the place of politics. In other words, the orders that make the world are never national orders but regional and environmental. (personal communication, 9/13/95)

Given his aspersion of politics in favor of understanding Irish culture in terms of shared geography, Evans could thumb his nose at both Nationalist and Unionist ideologies to define Ulster as a microcosm of Ireland—neither the Republic of Ireland nor the province of Northern Ireland, but the Island of Ireland. “Partly because this region of entry [Ulster] has received throughout the centuries almost every culture-layer that has been deposited in Ireland, . . . this most British part of Ireland is also the most Irish” (1942:8).

Given the tendency of both Nationalist and Unionist ideologues to divide their communities along “racial” lines, Evans's views on the relationship between geography and culture allowed him to reject not only politics but also race as a meaningful category (cf. Boas, 1940:3-239).

In many aspects of material culture as well as in speech and gestures, in folk beliefs and attitudes, in their dry satirical humour, the people of Ulster share a common tradition. . . . The [Protestant] planter has unconsciously absorbed much of the Irishness he rejects: witness the scorn the most fervent Orangeman [Ulster Protestant] will pour on the Englishman who fails to get his tongue round Magherafelt or

Ahoghill. . . . One can only speculate on the amount of native blood absorbed in earlier times by the planters, or the extent to which for various reasons there were changes of religious adherence. It may be stated that what distinguishes the people of Ireland in general, including Ulster, is the high percentage of people with blood-group O, and the frequency of the combination of dark hair and light eyes. . . . [I]t seems profitless to pursue the question of so-called *racial* differences. (1970:11-12, my emphasis)

Finally, Evans, like Boas, believed that cultural change was at least in part brought about through geographical diffusion of ideas, reinterpreted and adapted to new social and physical environments. Understanding similarities between groups as a result of their geographical proximity or mutual access countered the idea, espoused by cultural evolutionists like Edward Tylor and Lewis Morgan, that cultural similarities are the result of two groups of people belonging to the same stage on a universal continuum of cultural evolution. Because of his investment in geography, Evans was equally invested in history, for as one of his students recalls, "To him, geography was the common ground between the natural world and cultural history" (Glasscock 1991:87). As we shall see, Evans formulated a unique view of history that neither completely accepted cultural evolutionism nor abandoned the idea of evolution and survivals.

History, Survivals, and Evolution

If Evans had had to choose one umbrella discipline for his work in folklife and geography it may well have been history. Unlike American folklorists' struggle between anthropological and literary approaches (Zumwalt 1988), Evans's enterprise can be seen in terms of history, or more specifically, the endeavor to understand the present and culture in general by virtue of its contextualization in the past.

Nothing less than the whole of the past is needed to explain the present, and in this difficult task we cannot afford to neglect the unrecorded past. *The crafts of arable farming, of animal husbandry and the home industries have done more to shape our instincts and thoughts than the tramlings of armies or the wranglings of kings which fill the documents from which history is written.* (Evans 1942:xiv, my emphasis)

In Evans's perspective we see an implicit criticism of history as it has been constructed from written chronicles of the deeds of "Great Men." According to Evans, "the battles and the treaties, the statesmen and the kings"

are only part of the story of the past; the rest of it can be found “in the everyday things, in the places we live, in the customs we observe and in the beliefs we share” (1955:3). Because the lives of ordinary people have been excluded, history as it has been written is limited. Evans makes an explicit plea for a democratization of history if we are to imagine the collective, if we are to say anything about culture with accuracy. “The geographer and the anthropologist cannot regard invading armies, rulers, statesmen or other Great Men as the chief makers of history, or great literatures as the sole test of culture” (1992 [1973]:9). Given this notion of history, one of the missions of folklife studies in Ireland (and elsewhere) is “rescuing from oblivion those parts of our island’s story which have escaped the eye of the historian” (1955:3).

Also implicit in Evans’s formulation of the proper reconstruction of the past is a claim that those focusing on cultural geography and folklife studies actually do the historian’s job better. The geographer and folklife researcher use different texts, the landscape and material culture respectively rather than the written record, to access the past. The landscape offers a cumulative record of how groups of people have altered and adapted to their environment—it is culturally inscribed space that, by virtue of its survival or excavation, can be explored diachronically as culturally inscribed time. Material culture, contextualized in the cultural landscape, grants us a wider perspective on longer expanses of time and greater numbers of people than documentation alone. Glassie, a proponent of Evans’s methods of historical contextualization, characterizes the benefit of Evans’s shift in texts.

One of the problems with the historian who works with documents, who therefore hasn’t quantitative experience, is the inability to discriminate between what is really continuous and what is really revolutionary. I think the problem of the document is that it implies that everything is revolutionary, every generation is in transition. . . . Evans by virtue of archaeological and geographical experience. . . has a quantity of untabulated experiences, he has an intuition for which things are timeless and which are genuinely revolutionary, as opposed to the view of the world where everything is constantly changing. I think that material culture does that particular job better than the written record. (personal communication, 9/13/95)

If history is a record of ceaseless flux and occasional, genuine revolutions, then the mark of a good historian is being able to discriminate between the two. And if we are to take seriously the effort to interpret a culture in its historical context, we must have a way to glimpse a longer view of past time.

If we follow Evans's example, we are bound to discover continuities between our present and past ways of life. Evans's earliest forays into folklife studies¹² were the direct result of his being shocked by excavating objects and settlement and agricultural patterns that were identical to those still being employed efficiently in the present day. Further fieldwork on belief and custom led Evans to conclude that in Ireland "an insular setting, peripheral location, and a diversified environment provide ideal conditions for cultural survivals" (1972:529). Ireland, then, offers the historian a window into the past: "The outstanding interest of Ireland for the student of European origins lies in the fact that in its historic literature, language and social organization, as well as in its folklore and folk customs, it illustrates the marginal survival of archaic elements of the Indo-European world" (1957:xiv). Having begun his folklife studies, Evans came to believe that Ireland's unique character can be understood not only through an investigation of its geography but also through its wealth of cultural survivals.

I became convinced that a significant factor in what is sometimes called the essential unity of Ireland, besides the unities of climate and landscape. . . has been the retention, persisting in many areas into modern time, of certain attitudes towards the world and the otherworld, of traditional customs, beliefs and seasonal festivals which had often assumed the guise of Christian piety, but which had their origins in the Elder Faiths of pre-Christian times. (1992 [1973]:xi)

Yet it is important to be careful here with the term "survival" which has had widely differing definitions. Tylor understood survivals to be "processes, customs, opinions, and so forth, which have been carried on by force of habit into a new state of society different from that in which they had their original home, and they thus remain as proofs and examples of an older condition of culture out of which a newer has been evolved" (1970 [1871]:16). At first, this sounds similar to Evans's conception of survivals in their illustration of an "older condition of culture." But Evans would have taken exception with Tylor's belief that survivals survive because they are carried on mindlessly by habit. Whereas Tylor considered survivals to be entirely vestigial, indicative of cultural inertia, and worth discarding, Evans believed that survivals survive for a reason—they are adaptive to changing physical and social environments. Boas, too, considered cultures to be in constant flux and noted that many elements of culture possess "marvelous longevity" because they can be usefully reintegrated (1955 [1927]:7).

Whichever notion of survivals we choose forces us to consider the question of evolution. Statements like Evans's about the "immemorial antiquity" of folklore and folklife and its usefulness as a window into the past may strike our present sensibilities as old-fashioned. This, I believe, is

due in large part to Boas's legacy in American anthropology and folkloristics that rightfully calls for the revision of ethnocentric theories of cultural evolution. The formulation by Tylor and Morgan, among others, of a universal and uniform model of human evolution—from savagery to barbarism to civilization—allows the elite of the Western world, secure in their superiority at the apex of evolution, to justify any number of mistreatments of the “inferior races.”

Evans's work illustrates that Tylor and Morgan did not provide the only models of evolution. To some extent, Evans the materialist would have agreed with Morgan who considered technological progress the driving force of evolution. Evans's concentration on the material aspects of rural folklife was not a simple-minded, Luddite frustration with the technology of urban life spawned by the Industrial Revolution. Yet, for Evans real progress could not be gauged by increasing technological complexity but by evermore precise and intelligent use of natural resources and adaptation to one's environment. For example, a farmer and a blacksmith living in the same region can work together to produce a spade that is perfectly adapted to the local soil. However, the centralization of production effected by the Industrial Revolution generates standardized farm machinery that does not necessarily accommodate specific, local needs.¹³ For Evans, this is the opposite of progress. The evolution of forms seen in the cultural landscape or abstracted from the archaeological record (and the evolution of culture it illustrates) is a record of adaptation through time, not unilinear progression to the “modern” and “civilized” present.

Adaptation to environment is essentially a Darwinian idea. According to Darwin, evolution in the natural world has no direction, no goal analogous to Tylor's “civilization” towering at the top of an evolutionary ladder. As Stephen Jay Gould summarizes Darwin's idea of evolution, “Organisms become better adapted to their local environments, and that is all” (1977:12).¹⁴ Substitute “humans” for “organisms” and we have a better idea of how Evans could conceive of “cultural evolution” without any need for a trajectory of positive progression—a conception truer to Darwin than Tylor's. Further, it is interesting to note that Evans considered himself a follower of Darwin, while in an introductory note to his *The Origins of Culture* (1970 [1871]:xvi), Tylor rather defensively insisted that Darwin had no influence on him.

Whether or not one subscribes to a Darwinian notion of non-linear evolution, anyone interested in material culture and its change or continuity over time must contend with some concept of evolution to account for diachronic variation. Robert Lowie, who as a strict Boasian anthropologist was critical of the idea of evolution and especially of Morgan's *Ancient Society*, nonetheless conceded that evolution was a justifiable concept in the study of material culture.

Evolution is a positive fact in material culture. . . . To admit this, together with the possibility that material conditions may affect other phases of life, is to open the way for a fixed sequence of social and religious phenomena. . . . [The concept of evolution] is thus very far from dead and our duty is merely to define it with greater precision. (quoted in Leacock 1974:lxvii)

Although the idea of evolution can certainly be twisted into an ethnically suspect theory, especially when articulated in terms of a racial hierarchy, evolution in general is simply not a bad idea.

Implications for the Study of Folklore

Although Evans's fieldwork focused primarily on material culture, he was by no means uninterested in folk custom and narrative, those mainstays of folklorists and anthropologists interested in characterizing a particular culture.¹⁵ All of his major works on Irish folk culture—*Irish Heritage*, *Irish Folk Ways*, *The Personality of Ireland*, and *Mourne Country*—begin with extensive accounts of people's experience of place. He focuses on their daily routines, tools, and strategies of survival and how these are adapted to specific social and physical environments. And in all of these works, he ends with a chapter on folk custom, belief, and oral traditions.¹⁶ Evans's organization of his books way once again demonstrates his commitment to thorough contextualization. For him, a person cannot be qualified to address questions of worldview or generalize about the aesthetic or expressive aspects of a culture before he or she has become intimately familiar with those practicalities of everyday life which are of daily currency in the mind. To appropriate the phrasing of Clifford Geertz, work is a cultural system.¹⁷ To summarize the conclusions of Henry Glassie in his research in a rural district of Co. Fermanagh, work is a way to think, and it has everything to do with folklore. "Stories propose ideas that are refined and widened in workaday experience, then proposed anew in stories. Only when they are linked to daily work, to the creation of landscape, can stories lead us or their people to philosophy" (Glassie 1982:577).

I would like to return to the idea offered earlier that if we are concerned with culture, the dynamic interaction between the individual and the collective, what affords the most ethnographic insight is paying attention to what concerns people everyday and to their own articulations of mind—whether that is found in the narratives they tell, the songs they sing, the quilts they make, the houses they build, or the fields they plow. Folklore is a way to study this, and in a very real sense, folklife is a reassertion of and a redirection back to this fundamental tenet of Boasian anthropology. The

folklife movement, of which Evans was so great a part, expands our notion of the folklore text beyond the verbal to the material. Evans reminds us that functional material objects and patterns of landscape can be as expressive of mind as any readily identified artistic endeavor.

Notes

1 Evans was a visiting professor at Bowdoin College (Brunswick, Maine) from 1948 to 1949 and at Louisiana State University in 1970 (Glasscock 1991:90). He also wrote about folklife studies, Irish folklife patterns recapitulated in the American landscape, and the Irish in North America in American journals, including the *Journal of the Folklore Institute* (1965), and in American books on the study of folklore, including Richard Dorson's influential *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (1972).

2 For example, see Bauman 1996.

3 There is certainly overlap between American and European folklore scholarship, but to be more specific, the scholars identified contributed to the particular intellectual framework in which the study of folklore was conceived in America.

4 The folklife movement achieved its first comprehensive articulation in Scandinavia, especially in Sweden under the influence of Sigurd Erixson, where it was concerned with the study of regional ethnology.

5 Evans's other books include *France: A Geographical Introduction* (1937), *Mourne Country: Landscape and Life in South Down* (1951), *Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland* (1966), and *The Personality of Ireland: Habitat, Heritage and History* (1992 [1973]).

6 As we shall see, Evans's anti-political views were themselves "political" in the contemporary, broad definition of the term. Throughout, I use "anti-political" to characterize Evans's fundamentally skeptical views about the lasting significance of politicians, political ideologies, and the bureaucratic machinery of governments.

7 After the Anglo-Irish War, or the Irish War of Independence, the British government and members of the Irish Republican Army and the Dáil Éireann (a provisional Irish parliament) signed a treaty that divided the island. Twenty-six southern counties were established as the Irish Free State (eventually to become the Republic of Ireland in 1949), and six northeastern counties remained part of Britain as the province of Northern Ireland. Since partition, tension between the Catholic Nationalist and Protestant Unionist or Loyalist communities, arguably

exacerbated by a British military presence, has left Northern Ireland a volatile and occasionally violent province.

For future reference throughout this paper, Evans and others refer to Northern Ireland as "Ulster," although, strictly speaking, Ulster (originally one of the four ancient provinces of Ireland) is a regional term that today includes nine northern counties, three of which became part of the Free State in 1922.

8 In fact, *Irish Heritage* began as a compilation of Evans's radio addresses.

9 Johann Gottfried Herder, however, touched upon but did not fully elaborate a notion of anthro-po-geography in the eighteenth century. For example, he stated that "Whoever examines the formation of our nature through external means in relation to each inhabited climate cannot avoid thinking that the diverse climates of diverse peoples also has a purpose in the design of the intellectual education of human beings. We are not, however, the product of local climate alone, for living creatures like ourselves contribute to our education, habits, and development" (1993:51).

10 Evans's reference to Darwin echoes Fleure's application of Darwin's description of evolution in the natural world to a critique of environmental determinism. "The core of Darwin's thought seemed to me to be the idea that living things and their environments were ever acting upon one another in such a complex fashion that there is little profit in trying to differentiate influences of environment on man and influences of man on environments save in a crude way in dealing with short-term changes. Men and their environment must be studied together" (Fleure 1949:2).

11 I am indebted to Henry Glassie for a discussion we had about this topic on 9/13/95.

12 Described in "Donegal Survivals" and "Some survivals of the Irish Openfield system," both published in 1939.

13 More specifically, I am referring to the centralization brought about by the Industrial Revolution once it was steered by the desire of capitalists to consolidate production while expanding markets and thereby to increase profit. The technological innovations of the Industrial Revolution were not in and of themselves predestined to become standardized.

14 I am indebted to Michael Robert Evans for this quotation from Gould.

15 Cf. Boas 1970 [1916] and Benedict 1935.

16 It should also be noted that in his attempt to interpret material culture, Evans paid close attention to the oral traditions concerning objects such as tools and houses. "However interesting we may find 'bygones' for their own sake—and most

of us take a natural interest in the way our forefathers lived—there is need to know not only how these relics were made and used but also what beliefs were held about them. Wherever possible I have studied the techniques of making and using tools as well as their lore” (1957:xiv).

17 Cf. Geertz’s “Ideology as a Cultural System” (1973a), “Religion as a Cultural System” (1973b), and “Common Sense as a Cultural System” (1983).

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